

Core values

- **Treat all individuals with respect and dignity**
- **Improve access to a fair and humane legal immigration system**
- **Prioritize family unity**
- **End collaboration of local police with ICE**
- **End the detention bed quota**
- **Promote alternatives to detention**

Current enforcement policies have torn families and communities apart, devastated our congregations and violated the rights of U.S. citizens and immigrants alike. In 2012 alone, the United States spent more than \$18 billion of taxpayers' money on the machinery of immigration enforcement, more than is spent on all other federal law enforcement agencies combined. Above all else, enforcement policies must treat all individuals with respect and dignity.

The Interfaith Immigration Coalition (IIC) is strongly opposed to policies that mandate, resource, and encourage local police to enforce immigration law. Collaborations between local police and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) compromise community policing efforts and cause victims and witnesses to fear the police, which makes immigrant communities targets of crime and jeopardizes community safety. States and localities should not be required to participate in immigration enforcement programs, including the forwarding of fingerprints and other biometric information to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes. He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing.

Deuteronomy 10:17-18 (NIV)

ICE and local law enforcement partnerships have significantly increased immigrant arrests through programs such as 287(g), Secure Communities, and the Criminal Alien Program. These policies separate thousands of immigrants from their community and their loved ones every year. The perceived need to put these individuals behind bars has resulted in increased reliance on private prison corporations that profit on human beings in detention. *(continued on next page)*

The faces of immigration

Maria and Nichole

This is Maria and her one-year-old daughter Nichole. Their suffering began when ICE officials went to the laundry where her husband, Concho, worked looking for him. He was not there.

The next morning ICE showed up at the front door of the family home banging on the door and loudly shouting Concho's name. Maria went out first and scolded them for frightening the children. She asked why they were there. They said that they wanted Concho. Marie asked, "Why? What had he done?" The ICE officers said that he was an illegal and that is why they wanted him. Maria replied, "How will I take care of the children without their father to provide for the family?"

Maria is ill with a serious thyroid problem for which she cannot get medical care. The ICE agents handed her the business cards of an immigration lawyer here in Pittsburgh and said, "Call this lawyer to help you out." They took Concho. He was in Allegheny County Jail on an immigration hold. Maria has already paid the lawyer \$8,000. The family fears he will be deported.



While steps have been taken to promote alternatives to detention, immigration detention is still excessively relied upon at great financial and moral cost. Immigration detention quintupled between 1994 and 2011 without regard to cost, space limitations, or effectiveness of available alternatives. The exponential growth of the immigration detention industry has forged an irrational and immoral mandate enacted by Congress to keep 34,000 individuals a day in immigration detention. Congress should reject this “bed quota” through the appropriations process, and provide robust resources for community-based alternatives to detention and the Department of Justice’s Legal Orientation Program for immigrant detainees.



How do our faith principles inform our policy recommendations?

There is great need to revisit and reform our immigration system, including interior enforcement priorities and methodology. Sadly, the vast majority of legislative proposals provide additional funding for detention facilities run by private prison corporations and task local and state law enforcement officials with operating as immigration enforcement officers. This type of legislation is ineffective and fiscally irresponsible. Effective alternatives to detention cost a fraction compared to the cost of detaining immigrants in detention facilities. Conflating local and state law enforcement with immigration enforcement makes communities less safe, as individuals are afraid to report crimes for fear of putting their family, neighbors or themselves at risk of deportation. Bills that criminalize helping individuals or families without documentation conflicts with our integrity as people of faith; we are called to help our neighbors regardless of immigration status. These interior enforcement tactics continue at the expense of community safety and in place of addressing the root causes of migration, meeting critical humanitarian protection needs, or fixing our broken immigration system. Instead of continuing to detain immigrants to meet unrealistic bed quotas and tearing families apart, we seek legislation that serves communities, keeps families together, and protects our most vulnerable brothers and sisters.

We support policies and legislation that first and foremost seek to protect families, communities, and individuals all across the United States and treats all people humanely, regardless of their legal status. A starting point would be legislation that increases alternatives to detention, ends congressional bed quotas, and does not require local and state-level law enforcement to act as immigration officers. Our interior enforcement policies should reflect the values of our nation, uplifting individuals and communities in need.



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